

Foreword

The term “public safety diving” is a generic term used to describe the underwater work conducted by law enforcement, fire rescue, and search and rescue/recovery dive teams. Public safety divers (PSDs) are different from recreational divers in many aspects. Unlike a recreational diver who can plan the date, time and location of a dive, PSDs respond to emergencies 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays and weekends. It is not uncommon for PSDs to dive in the middle of the night, during inclement weather, in zero visibility “black water,” or in waters contaminated by chemicals and biohazards.

Public safety diving personnel are exposed to significant hazards and risks when engaging in an active dive operation and during training. Divers are often in a zero visibility environment under extreme physical and mental conditions. Hazard analysis and risk assessment of the dive area is always a factor to determine if a dive operation should take place (NFPA 1670, 1999).

A Guide to Public Safety Diving can help diving supervisors, dive safety officers, public safety divers and many others review safe procedures for public safety diving.

In North Carolina, the N.C. Department of Labor enforces the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act through a state plan approved by the U.S. Department of Labor. NCDOL offers many educational programs to the public and produces publications to help inform people about their rights and responsibilities regarding occupational safety and health.

When reading this guide, please remember the mission of the N.C. Department of Labor is greater than just regulatory enforcement. An equally important goal is to help citizens find ways to create safe workplaces. Everyone profits when managers and employees work together for safety. This booklet, like the other educational materials produced by the N.C. Department of Labor, can help.

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